



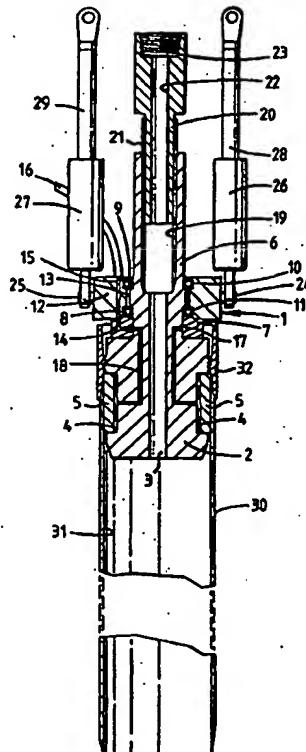
INTERNATIONAL APPLICATION PUBLISHED UNDER THE PATENT COOPERATION TREATY (PCT)

(51) International Patent Classification 7 : E21B 19/16, 19/06, 31/03, 33/126, 43/10, 23/04		A1	(11) International Publication Number: WO 00/05483 (43) International Publication Date: 3 February 2000 (03.02.00)
(21) International Application Number: PCT/GB99/02203 (22) International Filing Date: 22 July 1999 (22.07.99)		(81) Designated States: AU, CA, NO, US, European patent (AT, BE, CH, CY, DE, DK, ES, FI, FR, GB, GR, IE, IT, LU, MC, NL, PT, SE).	
(30) Priority Data: 9815809.0 22 July 1998 (22.07.98) GB 9818358.5 24 August 1998 (24.08.98) GB		Published <i>With international search report. Before the expiration of the time limit for amending the claims and to be republished in the event of the receipt of amendments.</i>	
(71) Applicant (for all designated States except US): WEATHERFORD/LAMB, INC. [US/US]; c/o CSC – The United States Corporation Company, 1013 Centre Road, Wilmington, DE 19805 (US).			
(72) Inventors; and (75) Inventors/Applicants (for US only): PIETRAS, Bernd-Georg [DE/DE]; Sandriedeweg 12, D-30900 Wedemark (DE). APPLETION, Robert, Patrick [GB/GB]; Glenburn House, Tomaveen, Banchory, Aberdeenshire AB31 4NV (GB).			
(74) Agent: HARDING, Richard, Patrick; Marks & Clerk, Oxford Business Park South, 4220 Nash Court, Oxford OX4 2RU (GB).			

(54) Title: CONNECTION OF TUBULARS USING A TOP DRIVE

(57) Abstract

An apparatus for facilitating the connection of tubulars using a top drive, which apparatus comprises a body (2; 102) connectable to said top drive, said body (2; 102) comprising at least one gripping element (5; 105) radially displaceable by hydraulic or pneumatic fluid to drivingly engage said tubular (30; 110) to permit a screw connection between said tubular and a further tubular to be tightened to the required torque.



FOR THE PURPOSES OF INFORMATION ONLY

Codes used to identify States party to the PCT on the front pages of pamphlets publishing international applications under the PCT.

AL	Albania	ES	Spain	LS	Lesotho	SI	Slovenia
AM	Armenia	FI	Finland	LT	Lithuania	SK	Slovakia
AT	Austria	FR	France	LU	Luxembourg	SN	Senegal
AU	Australia	GA	Gabon	LV	Latvia	SZ	Swaziland
AZ	Azerbaijan	GB	United Kingdom	MC	Monaco	TD	Chad
BA	Bosnia and Herzegovina	GE	Georgia	MD	Republic of Moldova	TG	Togo
BB	Barbados	GH	Ghana	MG	Madagascar	TJ	Tajikistan
BE	Belgium	GN	Guinea	MK	The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	TM	Turkmenistan
BF	Burkina Faso	GR	Greece	ML	Mali	TR	Turkey
BG	Bulgaria	HU	Hungary	MN	Mongolia	TT	Trinidad and Tobago
BJ	Benin	IE	Ireland	MR	Mauritania	UA	Ukraine
BR	Brazil	IL	Israel	MW	Malawi	UG	Uganda
BY	Belarus	IS	Iceland	MX	Mexico	US	United States of America
CA	Canada	IT	Italy	NE	Niger	UZ	Uzbekistan
CF	Central African Republic	JP	Japan	NL	Netherlands	VN	Viet Nam
CG	Congo	KE	Kenya	NO	Norway	YU	Yugoslavia
CH	Switzerland	KG	Kyrgyzstan	NZ	New Zealand	ZW	Zimbabwe
CI	Côte d'Ivoire	KP	Democratic People's Republic of Korea	PL	Poland		
CM	Cameroon	KR	Republic of Korea	PT	Portugal		
CN	China	KZ	Kazakhstan	RO	Romania		
CU	Cuba	LC	Saint Lucia	RU	Russian Federation		
CZ	Czech Republic	LI	Liechtenstein	SD	Sudan		
DE	Germany	LK	Sri Lanka	SE	Sweden		
DK	Denmark	LR	Liberia	SG	Singapore		

CONNECTION OF TUBULARS USING A TOP DRIVE

5

This invention relates to an apparatus for facilitating the connection of tubulars using a top drive and is more particularly, but not exclusively, intended for facilitating the connection of a section or stand of casing to a string of casing.

10

In the construction of oil or gas wells it is usually necessary to line the borehole with a string of tubulars known as casing. Because of the length of the casing required, sections or stands of say two sections of casing are progressively added to the string as it is lowered into the well from a drilling platform. In particular, when it is desired to add a section or stand of casing the string is usually restrained from falling into the well by applying the slips of a spider located in the floor of the drilling platform. The new section or stand of casing is then moved from a rack to the well centre above the spider. The threaded pin of the section or stand of casing to be connected is then located over the threaded box of the casing in the well and the connection is made up by rotation therebetween. An elevator is then connected to the top of the new section or stand and

20

the whole casing string lifted slightly to enable the slips of the spider to be released. The whole casing string is then lowered until the top of the section is adjacent the spider whereupon the slips of the spider are re-applied, the elevator disconnected and the process repeated.

25

It is common practice to use a power tong to torque the connection up to a predetermined torque in order to make the connection. The power tong is located on the platform, either on rails, or hung from a derrick on a chain. However, it has recently been proposed to use a top drive for making such connection. A "top drive" is a top driven rotational system substantially used for drilling purposes, assigned to the

30

drawworks at a higher level than the elevator, as is previously known.

Because of the high costs associated with the construction of oil and gas wells time is critical and it has been observed by the applicants that the time to connect a tubular to a top drive using existing equipment could be reduced.

Accordingly there is provided an apparatus for facilitating the connection of tubulars using a top drive, which apparatus comprises a body connectable to said top drive, said body comprising at least one gripping element radially displaceable by 5 hydraulic or pneumatic fluid to drivingly engage a tubular to permit a screw connection between said tubular and a further tubular to be tightened to the required torque.

Other features of the invention are set out in Claims 2 to 14.

10 The present invention also provides an apparatus for facilitating the connection of tubulars using a top drive, said apparatus comprising a body connectable to said top drive, said body comprising at least one gripping element radially displaceable to drivingly engage said tubular and a sealing packer to inhibit, in use, fluid in said tubular from escaping therefrom.

15 Preferably, said sealing packer can be actuated by hydraulic or pneumatic fluid.

One advantage of at least preferred embodiments of the invention is that the gripping elements transfer the full torque capacity of the top drive to the casing without 20 damaging the pipe surface. Elastomeric jaws greatly reduce the marks made by the dies as compared to simple metal dies. Elastomeric jaws also enable pipes with differing inside diameters to be clamped with only one set of jaws.

The present invention also provides an apparatus for running tubulars into a 25 borehole, said apparatus comprising a body provided with a wedge lock assembly and a hydraulically operable grapple to mechanically grip the inside wall of a tubular to be run into, or withdrawn from, the borehole, said grapple incorporating positive locking means to prevent inadvertent release of said grapple, said body further comprising means to prevent spillage of drilling fluid when the body is withdrawn from the tubular, 30 a sealing packer for engagement with the tubular to permit fluid to be circulated within the tubular, and a stabbing guide.

Further features of the apparatus for running tubulars into a borehole in accordance with the present invention are set out in Claims 18 to 24.

5 In use, such an apparatus may be connected to a top-drive unit via a threaded connection, or to a kelly driven rig via a pump joint latched into an elevator. Both systems have available a means of connecting up to a circulating system that will permit the casing to be filled or circulated at any time during the running operation.

10 Casing is normally run by picking up a joint at a time, utilising single pickup elevators to bring the joint into the derrick and connect it to the previously run joint, whether it be by threaded connection or "mechanical latching or locking". The two joints are either screwed or locked together and then lowered into the well bore using elevators.

15 With heavy casing strings it is required that very large elevators are used to be able to handle the load. This often means that the top of the casing joint must be set 8-10 feet above the rig floor to permit disengagement to take place. Scaffolding is often required for the rig crews to be able to stab or connect the next joint to the string. It is also normal to either utilise a separate pack-off assembly, or a fillup hose that must be 20 installed by the rig crew after it has been lowered and set in the slips.

Preferred embodiments of the present invention will permit the casing to be picked up by single pickup elevators, connected either by rotation or mechanical latch, and then the casing running tool to be "stabbed" into the bore of the top joint without 25 damage, due to the rubber bull-nose guide. When the tool is at the correct depth of penetration within the casing bore, the hydraulic piston is actuated to drive the grapple down onto the wedge lock and secure the grapple to the casing wall. As the casing string is lifted, the wedge-lock continues to drive into the grapple bore, providing an ever increasing wedge lock. The compression spring installed within the hydraulic 30 piston provides a "positive-lock" or failsafe should the hydraulic system fail for any reason.

When the apparatus is engaged, it is then possible to push, pull, or even rotate the casing string. A seal ring assembly is required to rotate the casing string, to permit constant control of the hydraulic actuating piston to be maintained.

5 Preferred embodiments of the apparatus are equipped with a through-bore to permit casing fillup and circulation to take place at any time. There may also be provided a pack-off that can be either inflatable or flow pressure operated.

10 The present invention also provides a top drive having an apparatus in accordance with the present invention attached thereto.

Some preferred embodiments of the invention will now be described, by way of example only, with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which:

15 Figure 1 is a cross-sectional side view of a first embodiment of an apparatus in accordance with the present invention inserted in a section of casing;

Figure 2 shows the apparatus of Figure 1 connected to a top drive and inserted in a section of casing;

20 Figure 3 shows a cross-sectional side view in perspective of part of a second embodiment of an apparatus in accordance with the present invention;

25 Figure 4 shows a cross-sectional side view of a third embodiment of an apparatus in accordance with the present invention; and

Figure 5 shows a cross-sectional side view of the embodiment of Figure 4 in use.

Referring to Figure 1 there is shown an apparatus which is generally identified 30 by reference numeral 1.

The apparatus 1 comprises a cylindrical body 2 which has a central passage 3 therethrough. The cylindrical body 2 has circumferentially spaced recesses 4 thereabout in which respective gripping elements 5 are located.

5 The upper part 6 of the cylindrical body 2 is of a reduced outer diameter. The upper part 6 passes through a rotary transmission 7 and is rotatably supported by two bearings 8, 9 which are arranged in corresponding channels 10, 11 in an annular support 12. A circumferentially raised portion 13 between the two bearings 8, 9 is provided in the upper part 6 to inhibit longitudinal movement of the cylindrical body 2.

10 The rotary transmission 7 is mounted fast on the annular support 12 and is in sealing tight relation with the upper part 6 which is rotatable relative thereto. The rotary transmission 7 is provided with a feed passage 15 in the annular support 12 and with a feed line 16. The other end of the feed passage 14 is in fluid communication with a radial channel 17. Feed passages 18 are provided in the cylindrical body 2 to link the radial channel 17 with the circumferential recesses 4 behind each gripping element 5.

15 The upper part 6 is provided with internal splines 19 along the upper part of the passage 3. The lower end of a connecting member 20 is provided with corresponding external splines and is located in the upper part of the passage 3. The upper end of the connecting member 20 is provided with a circulating canal 22 and threads 23 for connection to a top drive (Figure 2).

20 The support member 12 is provided with two axles 24, 25 to which compensating cylinders 26, 27 are attached, the corresponding pistons 28, 29 being, in use, connected to the body of the top drive (Figure 2).

25 Gripping elements 5 are preferably based on the construction described in PCT Publication No. WO 94/05894 which is incorporated herein for all purposes, and sold 30 by the applicants under the trade mark "MICRO-GRIP".

The gripping elements 5 comprise a plurality of longitudinally extending strips (not shown) which are embedded side by side in an elastomeric base member (not shown). Each strip projects out from said elastomeric base member, and each strip has a pipe gripping edge (not shown) facing away from the elastomeric base member, so that channels are formed between adjacent strips to accommodate debris from the surface of the casing to be gripped. The pipe gripping edge may, for example, comprise teeth, so that the strips resemble saw blades, or may comprise particulate material bonded to the strips. This type of gripping element allows rotational torque to be applied to the tubular and longitudinal forces produced by circulating fluid within the tubular and the weight of the tubular to be taken.

The cylindrical body 2 is shown in Figure 1 in a section of casing 20 with gripping elements 5 in a radially extended position, engaging the inner wall 31 of the section of casing 30 beneath a threaded box 32.

In use, the pistons 28, 29 are connected to the stator 34 of the top drive 33 (Figure 2). The rotor 35 of the top drive 33 is connected to the connecting member 20. The section of casing 30 is positioned over the upper portion of a casing string using, for example, a pipe positioning device. The top drive 33 with the attached apparatus 1 is lowered so that the cylindrical body 2 thereof enters the casing 30. Alternatively, the section or stand of casing may be brought towards the apparatus 1 using the methods and apparatus disclosed in co-pending UK Patent Application No. 9818366.8 entitled "Methods and Apparatus for Facilitating the Connection of Tubulars Using a Top Drive" filed by the applicant for the present application on 24 August 1998. If the support member 12 hits the top of the threaded box 32, the compensating cylinders 26, 27, which contain compressed air, cushion the impact whilst the splines 19, 21 in the upper part 6 of the cylindrical body 2 will allow relative longitudinal movement between the apparatus 1 and the top drive 33 whilst being able to transmit rotation therebetween.

Hydraulic pressure is applied through feed line 16, feed passage 15, feed passage 14, radial channel 17, and feed passage 18 into recess 4 behind gripping elements 5,

forcing the gripping elements 5 radially outwardly to engage the inner wall 31 of the casing 30.

The top drive 33 may now be used to rotate the rotor 35 which in turn rotates the 5 connecting member 20, the cylindrical body 2 and hence the casing 30. The compensating cylinders 26, 27 will allow a small downward movement as the threaded pin on the bottom of the casing enters the box on the top of the string, and may be controlled remotely. The compensating cylinders 26, 27 may be of the pneumatic compensating type, i.e. their internal pressure may be adjusted to compensate for the 10 weight of the casing 30 so that movement of the tubular may be conducted with minimal force. Pneumatic compensating cylinders also reduce the risk of damage to the threads of the tubulars. This can conveniently be achieved by introducing pneumatic fluid into the cylinders 26, 27 and adjusting the pressure therein. Hydraulic cylinders may, however, be used or hydraulic cylinders provided with a pneumatic bellows 15 system.

Once the joint is correctly tightened the elevator 37 is swung into position and the elevator slips therein (not shown) are actuated to grip the casing 30 beneath the box 32. The top drive 33 is then raised a small amount using the drawworks to enable the 20 slips in the spider to be released and the top drive and casing string is then lowered.

As the casing is lowered liquid may be introduced into the casing 30 via the connecting canal 22 and the central passage 3. The introduction of such liquid is often desirable to facilitate the lowering of the casing.

25

Referring to Figure 3 there is shown an apparatus in accordance with a second embodiment of the present invention which is generally identified by the reference numeral 101.

30 The apparatus 101 is generally similar to that of Figure 1, in that it comprises a cylindrical body 102 which has a central passage 103 therethrough. The cylindrical

body 102 has recesses 104 thereabout in which gripping elements 105 are located. The gripping elements 105 are provided with recesses 106.

5 The cylindrical body 102 is also provided with a cylindrical sealing packer 107 arranged below the gripping elements 105. The cylindrical sealing packer 107 is provided with a recess 108. The cylindrical sealing packer 107 which is made from an elastomeric material is fast with the cylindrical body 102.

10 The cylindrical body 102 is provided with a feed passage 109 which is at the upper end connected to a hydraulic fluid supply, and at the other, to the recesses 106 and 108 in the gripping elements 105 and the cylindrical sealing packer 107 respectively.

15 In use, the apparatus 101 is connected to a top drive, such as that shown in Figure 2, and is inserted into the top of a section or stand of casing 110. Hydraulic fluid pressure is applied through feed passage 109 into recesses 106 and 108 which moves the gripping elements 105 into engagement with the inner wall 111 and the cylindrical sealing packer 107 into contact with the inner wall 111. The gripping elements 105 engage with the inner wall 111 of the casing 110 so that rotational force can be 20 transmitted from the apparatus 101 to the casing 110. The sealing packer 107 substantially prevents any fluids such as mud from escaping between the apparatus 101 and the casing 110. This is particularly advantageous where it is desired to circulate fluid to facilitate running the casing. In particular, if the casing string becomes lodged 25 on an obstruction, liquid can be pumped down the casing string under high pressure to remove the obstruction. The sealing packer 107 facilitates this operation by inhibiting liquid under high pressure escaping through the top of the casing 30.

30 Referring to Figures 4 and 5 there is shown an apparatus in accordance with a third embodiment of the present invention which is generally identified by the reference numeral 201.

The apparatus comprises a cylindrical body 202 with a threaded connection 203 at the upper end for connection to a top drive. Attached to the cylindrical body 202, or machined into it, is a hydraulic cylinder 204, with threaded ports 205, 206 at opposite ends. These ports 205 and 206 permit hydraulic fluid to be injected under pressure to 5 manipulate a hydraulic piston 207, secured within the cylinder by a threaded lock ring 208. A compression spring 209 is located in the cylinder 204 above the piston 207.

A grapple 210, provided with serrated teeth machined into its outer surface, is provided around the cylindrical body 202 below the hydraulic cylinder 204. The 10 grapple 210 is connected to the hydraulic piston 207 by a threaded connection 211. A corresponding wedge lock 212 is provided on the cylindrical body 202. The grapple 210 and corresponding wedge lock 212 are located, in use, inside a casing 213. The piston 207 and lock ring 208 are fitted with seal rings (not shown) to prevent hydraulic fluid leakage.

15

A mud-check valve 214 is thread connected at the lower end of the wedge lock 212. Below this valve is a rubber pack-off assembly 215. These prevent spillage of drilling fluid when the apparatus 201 is removed from within the casing joint 213. The pack-off 215 can be energised by either internal mud pressure or external mud flow.

20

In use, the apparatus 201 is lowered into the casing joint 213 as shown in Figure 4. The grapple 210 is held out of contact with the wedge lock 212 by hydraulic fluid injected into port 206.

25

When the apparatus 201 is located at the correct installation depth within the casing 213, the pressure and fluid is released from port 206, and fluid is injected into port 205. This pushes the piston 207 downwards, pressing the grapple 210 against the wedge lock 212. The grapple 210 is forced outwards by the wedge lock 212, forming a mechanical friction grip against the inner wall of the casing 213. This is shown in 30 Figure 5.

The rig lifting equipment (not shown) raises the apparatus 201, and this causes the wedge lock 212 to be pulled upwards against the inner surface of the grapple 210, ensuring that constant outward pressure is applied to the grapple 210. The grip becomes tighter with increasing pull exerted by the rig lifting equipment.

5

Should hydraulic pressure be lost from port 205, the compression spring 209 ensures that the piston 207 continues to press the grapple 210 against the wedge lock 212, preventing release of the grapple from the wedge lock.

10

The apparatus 201 and casing 213 are then lowered into the well bore and the casing is secured. The apparatus 201 is lowered so that it supports its own weight only, and hydraulic fluid is then pumped out of port 205 and into port 206 to release the grapple 210 from the wedge lock 212 and thus release the apparatus 201 from the casing 213. The apparatus is then removed from the casing joint 213 and the process is repeated.

15

It is envisaged that the apparatus as described above could be used in conjunction with any of the apparatus and used with any of the methods as described in the co-pending International Applications based on GB Application Nos. 9818360.1, 20 9818363.5 and 9818366.8 entitled "An Apparatus for Facilitating the Connection of Tubulars Using a Top Drive", "Method and Apparatus for Facilitating the Connection of Tubulars using a Top Drive" and "Method and Apparatus for Facilitating the Connection of Tubulars using a Top Drive" respectively.

25

CLAIMS:

1. An apparatus for facilitating the connection of tubulars using a top drive, which apparatus comprises a body (2; 102) connectable to said top drive, said body (2; 102) comprising at least one gripping element (5; 105) radially displaceable by hydraulic or 5 pneumatic fluid to drivingly engage a tubular (30; 110) to permit a screw connection between said tubular and a further tubular to be tightened to the required torque.
2. An apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein said at least one gripping element (5; 105) has an elastomeric gripping surface incorporating projecting metal inserts or 10 saw blades capable of transmitting said torque.
3. An apparatus as claimed in claim 1 or 2, wherein said at least one gripping element (5; 105) is movable radially outwardly from said body (2; 102) to engage the inside wall (31; 111) of said tubular (30; 110) 15
4. An apparatus as claimed in claim 1, 2 or 3, wherein said body (2; 102) is connectable to a rotor (35) of said top drive in order to rotate said apparatus.
5. An apparatus as claimed in claim 1, 2, 3 or 4, further comprising a sealing 20 packer (107) for engagement with said tubular.
6. An apparatus as claimed in claim 5, wherein said sealing packer (107) can be activated by hydraulic or pneumatic fluid.
7. An apparatus as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein said body (2; 102) is 25 provided with a passage (3; 103) therethrough to allow excess fluid in said tubular to escape therefrom.
8. An apparatus as claimed in any preceding claim, further comprising a support 30 (12) for supporting the weight of said tubular during driving engagement of the tubular by said at least one gripping element (5; 105).

9. An apparatus as claimed in claim 8, wherein said support (12) is connectable to a stator of said top drive.

10. An apparatus as claimed in claim 8 or 9, wherein said support (12) is carried by 5 compensating pistons (26, 27) connectable to said top drive.

11. An apparatus as claimed in claim 10, wherein said compensating pistons (26, 27) are pneumatically operable and are adjustable to compensate for different weights of tubular.

10

12. An apparatus as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein an upper part of said body (2) comprises a splined recess into which a splined rotor or splined connecting member (20) may be located.

15 13. An apparatus as claimed in claim 8, 9, 10 or 11, wherein said support (12) is arranged circumjacent an upper part of said body (2) with a bearing (8, 9) arranged therebetween to allow said body (2) to rotate with respect to said support (12).

14. An apparatus as claimed in any preceding claim, further comprising a rotary 20 transmission (7) to allow hydraulic or pneumatic fluid to pass through said body (2; 102).

15. An apparatus for facilitating the connection of tubulars using a top drive, said apparatus comprising a body (102) connectable to said top drive, said body (102) 25 comprising at least one gripping element (105) radially displaceable to drivingly engage a tubular (110) and a sealing packer (107) to inhibit, in use, fluid in said tubular from escaping therefrom.

16. An apparatus as claimed in claim 15, wherein said sealing packer can be 30 actuated by hydraulic or pneumatic fluid.

17. An apparatus (201) for running tubulars (213) into a borehole, said apparatus comprising a body (202) provided with a wedge lock assembly (212) and a hydraulically operable grapple (210) to mechanically grip the inside wall of a tubular (213) to be run into, or withdrawn from, the borehole, said grapple incorporating 5 positive locking means to prevent inadvertent release of said grapple, said body further comprising means (214) to prevent spillage of drilling fluid when the body is withdrawn from the tubular, a sealing packer (215) for engagement with the tubular to permit fluid to be circulated within the tubular, and a stabbing guide (216).

10 18. An apparatus as claimed in claim 17, wherein the grapple (210) is connected to a hydraulic piston assembly (204,207) to permit engagement of the grapple with the inside walls of the tubular (213) to enable mechanical lift to be applied to the tubular.

15 19. An apparatus as claimed in claim 18, wherein the hydraulic piston assembly (204,207) is biased towards a failsafe position by a compression spring (209).

20 20. An apparatus as claimed in claim 18 or 19, wherein the hydraulic piston assembly incorporates a cylinder (204) which is either formed integrally with the body (202) or is attached thereto by threading or flanging.

20 21. An apparatus as claimed in claim 18, 19 or 20, wherein the body (202) is provided with a slip-ring assembly to enable hydraulic fluid to be supplied to the hydraulic piston assembly (204,207) whilst at the same time permitting rotation of the body and the tubular (213) thereon.

25 22. An apparatus as claimed in any one of claims 17 to 21, which is adapted to be used with different sizes of tubular.

23. An apparatus as claimed in any one of claims 17 to 22, wherein the body (202) 30 is fitted with a bull-nose guide (216) to prevent damage to the top of the tubular when the body is introduced into the tubular.

24. An apparatus as claimed in any one of claims 17 to 23, wherein the body (202) is provided with a through bore (217) to permit circulation of fluid.

25. A top drive having an apparatus as claimed in any preceding claim attached thereto.

1/4

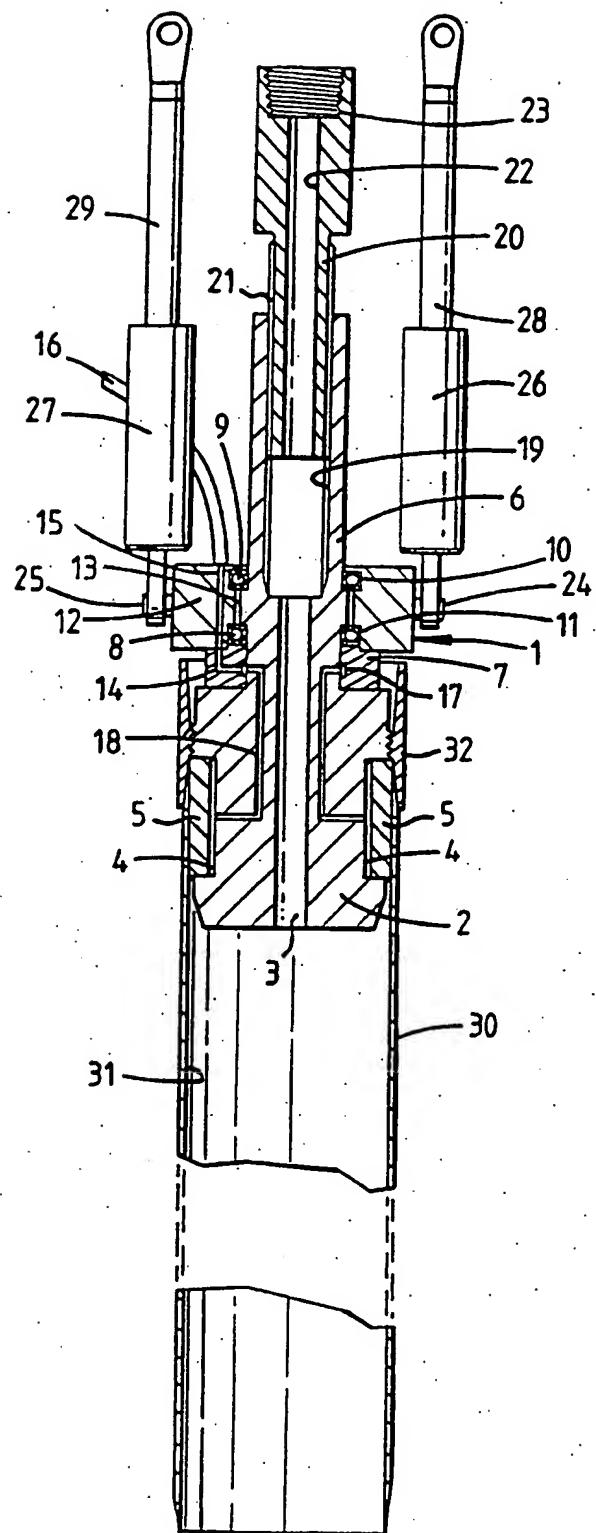


Fig. 1

2/4

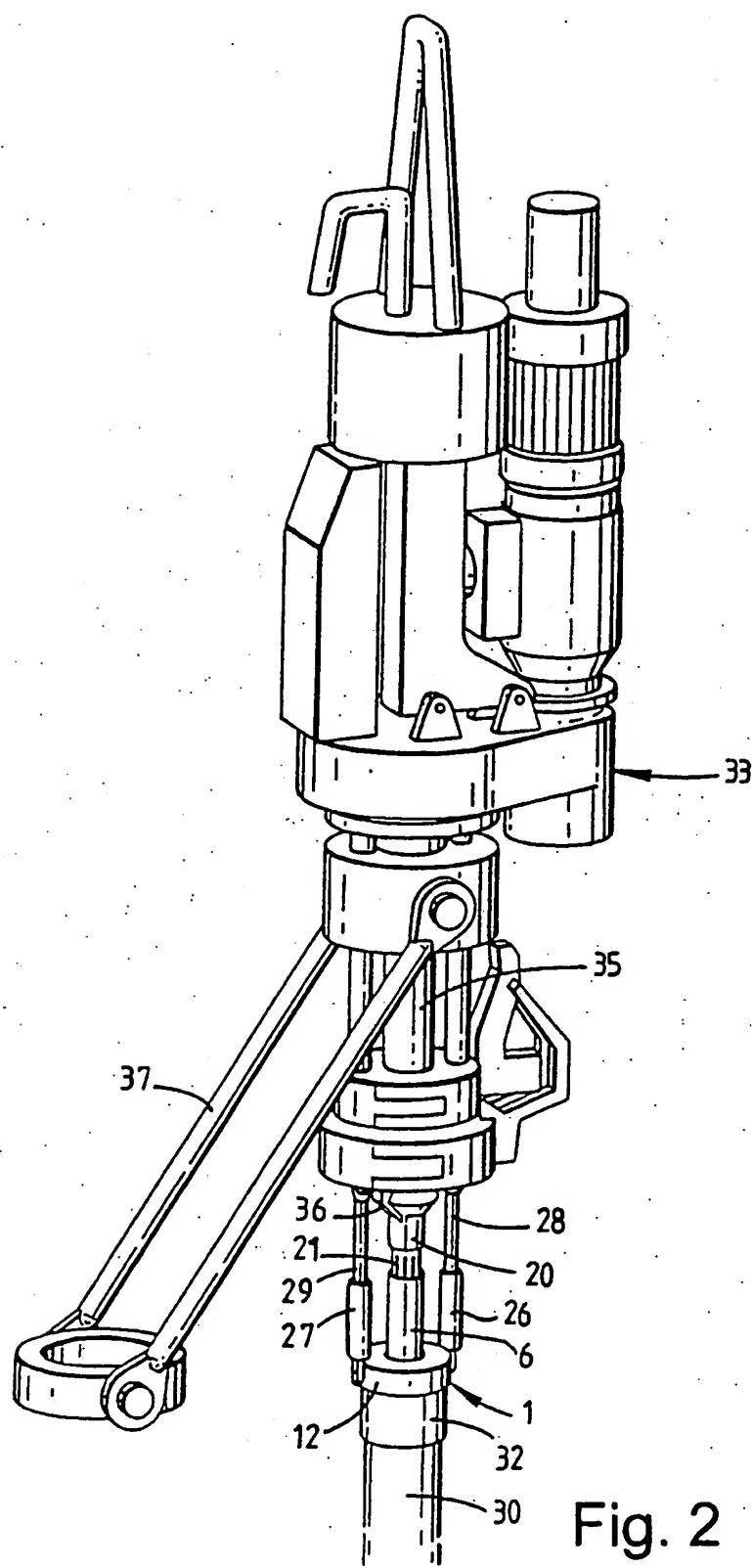


Fig. 2

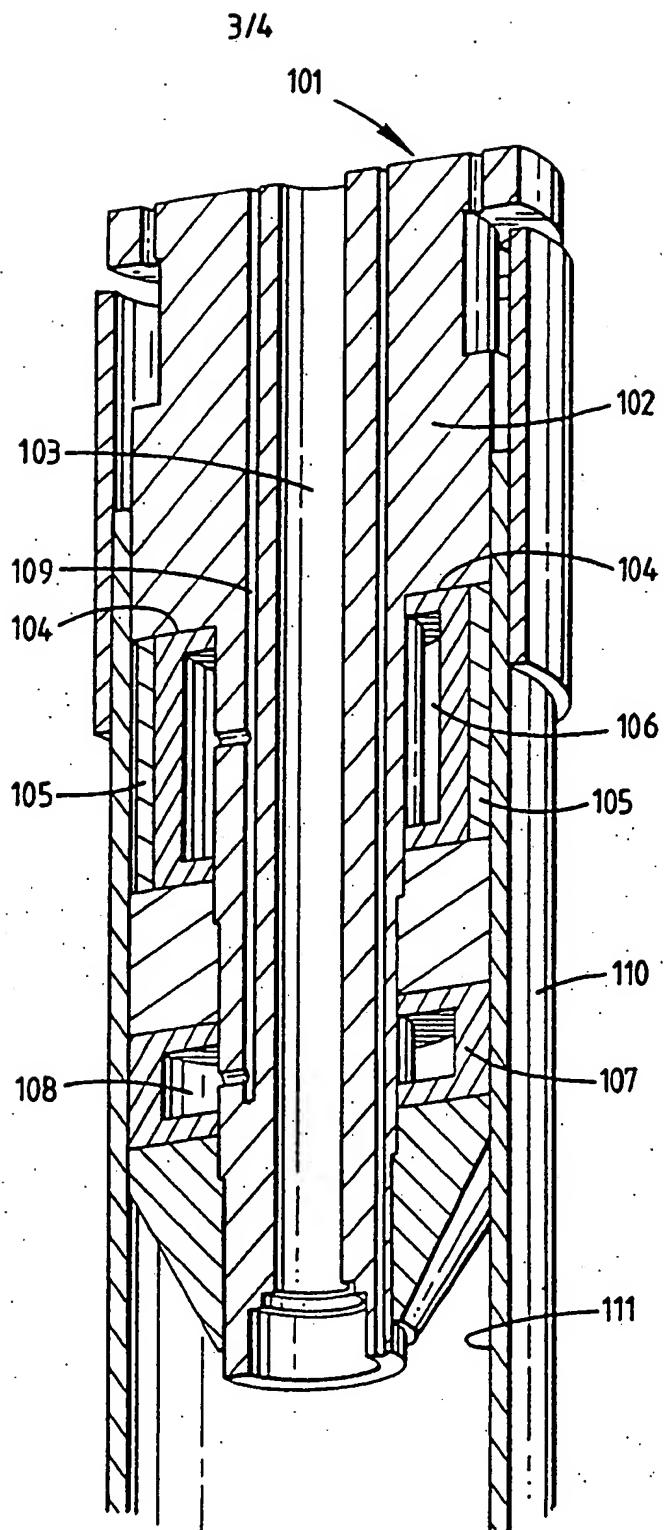


Fig. 3

4/4

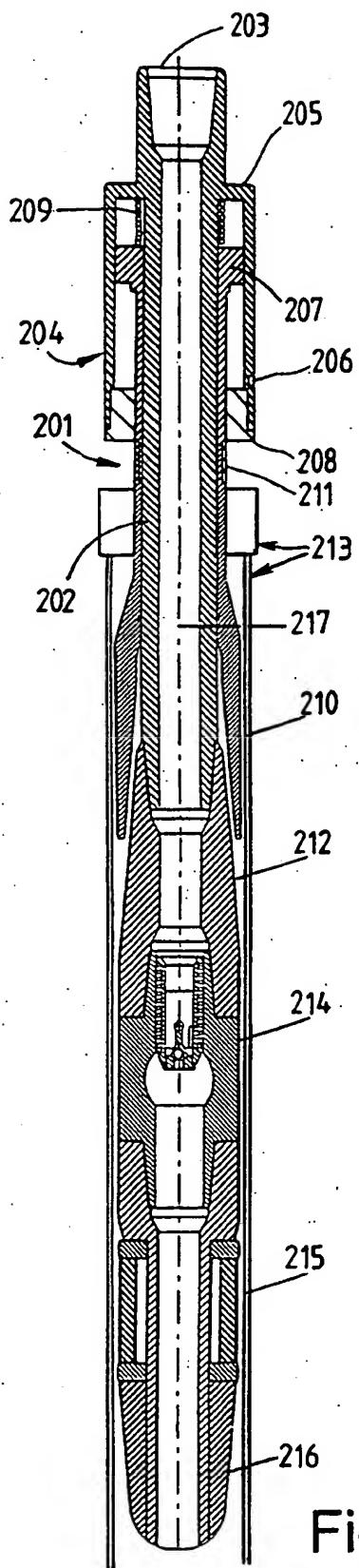


Fig. 4

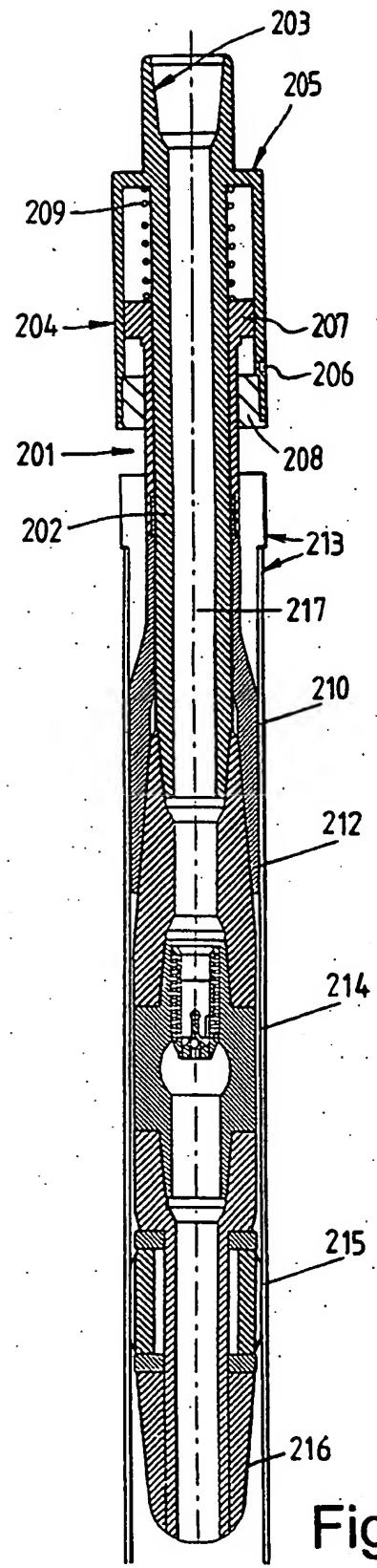


Fig. 5

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Int'l Search Application No
PCT/GB 99/02203

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER					
IPC 7	E21B19/16	E21B19/06	E21B31/03	E21B33/126	E21B43/10
	E21B23/04				

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

IPC 7 E21B

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practical, search terms used)

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	US 5 297 833 A (WILLIS CLYDE A ET AL) 29 March 1994 (1994-03-29) the whole document	1,4,7-11
A	WO 98 11322 A (GJEDDEBO JON ;HITEC ASA (NO)) 19 March 1998 (1998-03-19) figures	2,3,14
A	EP 0 525 247 A (APACHE CORP) 3 February 1993 (1993-02-03) figures 3,3A	1-3,15, 16
A	WO 98 05844 A (LUCAS BRIAN RONALD ;STOKKA ARNOLD (NO); WEATHERFORD LAMB (US)) 12 February 1998 (1998-02-12) abstract; figure 1	12,13
		-/-

Further documents are listed in the continuation of box C.

Patent family members are listed in annex.

* Special categories of cited documents :

- "A" document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance
- "E" earlier document but published on or after the International filing date
- "L" document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)
- "O" document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means
- "P" document published prior to the International filing date but later than the priority date claimed

"T" later document published after the International filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention

"X" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone

"Y" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art

"8" document member of the same patent family

Date of the actual completion of the International search

23 November 1999

Date of mailing of the International search report

30.11.1999

Name and mailing address of the ISA

European Patent Office, P.B. 6018 Patentstaan 2
NL - 2280 HV Rijswijk
Tel. (+31-70) 340-2040, Tx. 31 651 epo nl.
Fax: (+31-70) 340-3016

Authorized officer

Fonseca Fernandez, H

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International Application No	
PCT/GB 99/02203	

C.(Continuation) DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
A	US 4 762 187 A (HANEY KEITH M) 9 August 1988 (1988-08-09) abstract; figures	2,3
A	US 5 009 265 A (BAILEY THOMAS F ET AL) 23 April 1991 (1991-04-23) abstract	5,6
A	GB 2 275 486 A (WEPCO AS) 31 August 1994 (1994-08-31) abstract; figures	1
A	US 5 255 751 A (STOGNER HUEY) 26 October 1993 (1993-10-26)	
X	WO 96 18799 A (WEATHERFORD LAMB ;LUCAS BRIAN RONALD (GB); STOKKA ARNOLD (NO)) 20 June 1996 (1996-06-20) page 7 -page 9; figure 3	15,16
Y	WO 93 07358 A (WEPCO AS) 15 April 1993 (1993-04-15) claim 1; figures	15,16
Y	US 5 735 348 A (HAWKINS III SAMUEL P) 7 April 1998 (1998-04-07)	15,16
A	column 5; figure 1	5,6
A	US 4 605 077 A (BOYADJIEFF GEORGE I) 12 August 1986 (1986-08-12)	
A	US 4 287 949 A (LINDSEY JR HIRAM E) 8 September 1981 (1981-09-08) claim 1	17-20, 22,24,25
A	US 4 580 631 A (BAUGH HOLLIS A) 8 April 1986 (1986-04-08) abstract	17,21, 22,24,25
A	GB 2 310 678 A (SMITH INTERNATIONAL) 3 September 1997 (1997-09-03) claim 1	17,18, 20,24,25
A	US 5 553 672 A (SMITH JR SIDNEY K ET AL) 10 September 1996 (1996-09-10) abstract	17

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORTInternational application No.
PCT/GB 99/02203**Box I Observations where certain claims were found unsearchable (Continuation of item 1 of first sheet)**

This International Search Report has not been established in respect of certain claims under Article 17(2)(a) for the following reasons:

1. Claims Nos.: because they relate to subject matter not required to be searched by this Authority, namely:

2. Claims Nos.: because they relate to parts of the International Application that do not comply with the prescribed requirements to such an extent that no meaningful International Search can be carried out, specifically:

3. Claims Nos.: because they are dependent claims and are not drafted in accordance with the second and third sentences of Rule 6.4(a).

Box II Observations where unity of invention is lacking (Continuation of item 2 of first sheet)

This International Searching Authority found multiple inventions in this international application, as follows:

see additional sheet

1. As all required additional search fees were timely paid by the applicant, this International Search Report covers all searchable claims.

2. As all searchable claims could be searched without effort justifying an additional fee, this Authority did not invite payment of any additional fee.

3. As only some of the required additional search fees were timely paid by the applicant, this International Search Report covers only those claims for which fees were paid, specifically claims Nos.:

4. No required additional search fees were timely paid by the applicant. Consequently, this International Search Report is restricted to the invention first mentioned in the claims; it is covered by claims Nos.:

Remark on Protest

The additional search fees were accompanied by the applicant's protest.

No protest accompanied the payment of additional search fees.

FURTHER INFORMATION CONTINUED FROM PCT/ISA/ 210

This International Searching Authority found multiple (groups of) inventions in this international application, as follows:

1. Claims: 1-14

Apparatus for connecting and disconnecting sections of casing or string using a gripping element supported by a top drive

2. Claims: 15-16

Apparatus for connecting and disconnecting sections of casing or string using a gripping element supported by a top drive and having means to inhibit, in use, fluid in the string from escaping therefrom.

3. Claims: 17-25

Apparatus for running tubulars into a borehole using a hydraulically operated grapple element, having a positive locking means to prevent inadvertent release of said grapple and means to prevent spillage of fluid when the apparatus is withdrawn from the tubular.

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Information on patent family members

Int'l Application No
PCT/GB 99/02203

Patent document cited in search report	Publication date	Patent family member(s)		Publication date
US 5297833 A	29-03-1994	AU	5605194 A	08-06-1994
		CA	2148346 A,C	26-05-1994
		EP	0701531 A	20-03-1996
		WO	9411291 A	26-05-1994
WO 9811322 A	19-03-1998	NO	963823 A	16-03-1998
		AU	4323597 A	02-04-1998
		GB	2332009 A	09-06-1999
EP 0525247 A	03-02-1993	US	5036927 A	06-08-1991
WO 9805844 A	12-02-1998	GB	2315696 A	11-02-1998
		AU	3766297 A	25-02-1998
		EP	0917615 A	26-05-1999
		NO	990392 A	19-03-1999
		US	5839330 A	24-11-1998
US 4762187 A	09-08-1988	AT	90141 T	15-06-1993
		AU	1400188 A	06-10-1988
		CA	1299166 A	21-04-1992
		DE	3881429 A	08-07-1993
		EP	0285386 A	05-10-1988
		NO	881445 A	03-10-1988
US 5009265 A	23-04-1991	AU	617586 B	28-11-1991
		AU	4928090 A	13-09-1990
		AU	634093 B	11-02-1993
		AU	8389391 A	14-11-1991
		CA	2010326 A,C	21-08-1990
		IT	1240767 B	17-12-1993
		JP	2292492 A	03-12-1990
		NZ	232571 A	25-02-1993
GB 2275486 A	31-08-1994	NO	173750 C	26-01-1994
		AU	2754092 A	03-05-1993
		WO	9307358 A	15-04-1993
US 5255751 A	26-10-1993	AU	2923192 A	07-06-1993
		AU	3067492 A	07-06-1993
		CA	2122622 A	13-05-1993
		CA	2122623 A	13-05-1993
		EP	0706605 A	17-04-1996
		EP	0881352 A	02-12-1998
		WO	9309330 A	13-05-1993
		WO	9309331 A	13-05-1993
		US	5351767 A	04-10-1994
WO 9618799 A	20-06-1996	AU	4266796 A	03-07-1996
WO 9307358 A	15-04-1993	NO	173750 C	26-01-1994
		AU	2754092 A	03-05-1993
		GB	2275486 A,B	31-08-1994
US 5735348 A	07-04-1998	EP	0929731 A	21-07-1999
		NO	991615 A	03-06-1999
		WO	9814688 A	09-04-1998
		US	5918673 A	06-07-1999

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Information on patent family members

Int'l	Application No
PCT/GB 99/02203	

Patent document cited in search report	Publication date	Patent family member(s)			Publication date
US 4605077 A	12-08-1986	CA	1246048 A		06-12-1988
		EP	0185605 A		25-06-1986
		JP	1590532 C		30-11-1990
		JP	2014518 B		09-04-1990
		JP	61191790 A		26-08-1986
		NO	854826 A		05-06-1986
US 4287949 A	08-09-1981	US	RE31881 E		14-05-1985
US 4580631 A	08-04-1986	NONE			
GB 2310678 A	03-09-1997	US	5887660 A		30-03-1999
		GB	2310679 A		03-09-1999
		US	5884702 A		23-03-1999
US 5553672 A	10-09-1996	CA	2160048 A		08-04-1996
		GB	2293842 A, B		10-04-1996
		GB	2320939 A, B		08-07-1998
		NO	953978 A		09-04-1996